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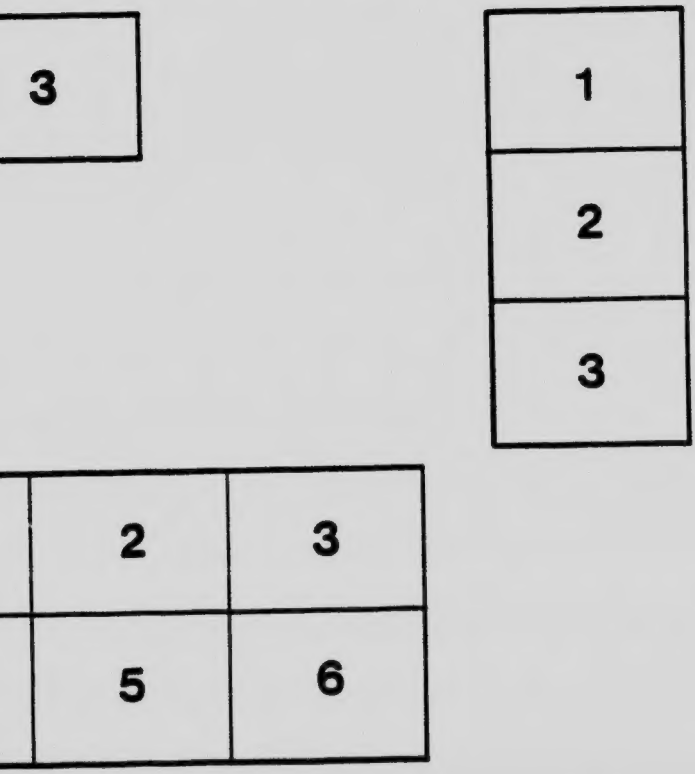

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TO THEIR MAJESTIES

KING GEORGE V.

AND

QUEEN MARY

DEVRIOHL, CANADA, 1911,
BY
GEORGE WHITFIELD GROTE

Ode on the Coronation of King George V.

I.

'Tis now the midnight hour by London bells;
Beneath old London Bridge the seaward flow
Of darkling waters paints the silver moon.
The ivy-laden rook-infested walls
Of many an Abbey of Crusader days
Sing requiems for Cœur de Lion's rest;
Once more the blood-stained banner of our God
Forefends the Temple of King Solomon;
This is the eve of one more day-of-days,
When George the Fifth, within the Abbey walls,
In solemn form shall be anointed King.

II.

On this, the eve of Coronation Day,
This Empire sings her Junetide evening hymn,
And joyously awaits the ruddy morn.
From Malta and the world's great middle sea,
From farthest Ind and Himalaya's clouds,
From Austral manly men, and hearts of oak,
From Afric, and Canadian sons of Mars,
Come songs of loyalty and loud acclaim
And murmurings of joy and sweet content.

III.

Now are we Britons, as one family,
Assembled on this glorious enterprise—
The crowning of our well-belovèd King.
We have the sunlight of the leafy June,
The heart-ease of the purple, heath-clad hills,
The green fields where the rose and shamrock bloom,
The soul-inspiring voices of the Lark
And Nightingale, and welcome respite from
The hollow moaning of December gales;
And England is at peace with all the world.

IV.

O Nightingale, whose song must e'er enthral
The sylvan shadows of the star-lit night,
How dost thou, Cynthia-like, the shepherd's heart
Beguile, that thou may'st kiss Endymion's lips?
Since e'er time was, till time shall be no more,
Thy moonlight song has marked, and e'er shall mark,
Love's trysting place, the goal of love's emprise.

V.

What mean the voices of the summer clouds?
What voices come from yonder painted peaks?
Pledges of Britain's Greater Empire, they,
Voices of loyalty from Canada.
What means yon stately city in mirage?
It is Victoria, Canada's gift
To us upon this coronation day.
What mean these seeming Dreadnaughts in the south?
They are the floating Castles of the Crown,

Borne from Victoria of the southern seas.
Whence came this throng in Oriental garb?
From out the vast incomparable heights
That pierce the sunlit Himalayan skies;
They come to pledge their fealty to the Crown.
Whence come these armies of the desert wild?
They are the soldiers of the Patriot Rhodes,
They are the invincible defenders of
The "all red line" from Cairo to the Cape.

VI.

Come hither, Britons, to this table-land
Hard by the sea—The Land of High Resolve—
This table-land is Britain's heritage
From days anterior to the Druid tombs.
It is Britannia's synonym for Light;
And this high sea is the broad Sea of Time,
Unbounded but by vast Eternity,
Available to them that love the light
What time great Phœbus nightly sinks to rest,
And angels walk upon the golden clouds;
When heavenly music laps the gilded shore.
This British Table-land guards every sea
And inland water o'er the wide, wide world.
Art thou a Briton? Make thy firm resolve!
For Parliaments do but reflect thy light,
And thou must answer for their blind misdeeds.
But, to be worthy of such guardianship,
Thou needs must hither come each sunset hour,
And drink some golden mystery of Light.
Return such men to Parliament as shall
Blend all the powers of local government
With what, within his coronation vow,

The King may deem not vested in the Crown.
But lo, yon violet ray, to purple, turns!
Up, Britons! Up, from these high restful crags!
Regard these dim-lit steps that lead ye down
To the mean drudgery of time and sense!
To-morrow ye shall climb Olympian heights
And view the Coronation of the King.
Once more, in all her Danish majesty,
The fair Queen-Mother, Alexandra, shall,
From far Parnassus, bless your songs of love.

VII.

Time was when crowns were from the laurel wrought
As emblems, then as now, of victory;
And on the Olympian field more prized than gold
Were they; yet has the laurel oft been worn
In pagan triumph, in the streets of Rome.
But this day's progress from the Palace gates
By England's well-belovèd King and Queen,
To old Westminster Abbey to be crowned,
Was but an act of solemn service. Gold
Was but as dross, save that in form it was
A crown. The anointing and investiture
By the Archbishops in the form prescribed,
Together with the act of crowning, were
But minor incidents compared with all
The acts and words of consecration. Prayer
And solemn praise to God in rhythmic sound
Filled the high sanctuary to the dome
In supplication to the King of Kings.
Thus was King George the Fifth of England crowned.
The King, all glorious in his royal robes,
And Mary, Queen of dignity and grace,

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Than whom none fairer ever wore a crown,
They twain, in mutual complement of joy,
And love, receive the homage of the world,
And forth unto great London's loving care
They lead a glittering galaxy of Kings
And Emperors in crimson robes arrayed,
Presaging Dreadnaughts and the majesty
That on the morrow shall outvie the North
Sea's welcome to the world's great battleships.

VIII.

From ages past each monarch's name has marked
A mile-stone in the chronicles of time.
'Tis true that on the highways of the world
Too many mile-stones are o'ergrown with moss,
Too few reflect the world's high noonday lights.
In our own land each patriot has his choice
And kneels full oft before the moss-grown mound,
If only that mound mark but one good deed.
We hail King George this day with many a loud
Acclaim, but that this Monarch of the sea
Shall find a place high on the scroll of time,
'Tis ours to do his well directed will.

IX.

List ye the murmuring melody of song
That floats aloft along the mountain-tops!
Lo, now the hills of heaven reverberate
The wayward music of the snowy clouds
That softly pierce the violet noon-day arch!
But hark, the rumbling of the gathering storm,

Make speed, the mountain torrent roars its wrath!
Sound an alarm! Away, away! Now stand
Ye all upon this dark, defiant rock!
Stand all apart! Behold, the blinding flash!
Black darkness breaks the lurid lightning shaft!
Whence come ye, spirits of the night? Break, break,
Ye crags and peaks! Fall ye upon our heads!
Whence come ye, demons of despair? Away!
Hope and dismay are naught! All else is naught!
Time is no more! All hope of Heaven is past!
Come, heavenly dome! Fall now, thou crumbling dome!
Lest we be doomed to "some more horrid hent!"
Awake, ye Britons! Call ye this a dream?
Beware the storm, that comes ye know not whence!

X.

O mocking bird, entrancing mocking bird,
Thou student of the art of mimicry,
How skilfully dost thou attune thine ear
To each gay warbler's eccentricities!
Oft has the animation of thine eye,
Coupled with thy proud nimbleness of stride,
Captured the heart and mystified the mind
Of all the gladsome songsters of the grove,
As when, at dawn, the dew was on the leaf
And every bush was ripe with melody,
And each fond idiosyncrasy of song
Was reproduced by thy celestial voice.
How dost thou tantalize, in mimic lay,
The patient heart of them that love in vain!
Give o'er thy witchery of pranks! hast thou
No kindness: Nay, but that thy love is true!
Is known to all the victims of thy mirth.

Deign, for a moment, thou fond prince of love,
To be thyself, and sing us all to sleep,
And woe betide thee, if thou hearest aught
Of love songs that we mumble in our dreams.
Sing to our souls love's moonlight lullaby,
Thou serenader of the midnight moon!

XI.

Let the intrepid woo sublimity
Where eagles float beyond the venturous clouds,
But who shall dare essay the higher flight
Of the ethereal realm where genius reigns?
Who shall describe a King, invincible,
Or who set bounds to immortality?
Shall any man by formula of words,
Tell what the quality of genius is?
One sees it in the great philosopher,
One finds it on some crimsoned Waterloo,
Or on the tide of some Trafalgar Bay.
Yet is it ever indescribable.
One patriot falls at far Thermopylæ,
And gives his Fatherland undying fame.
An hundred indecisive battles lead
Up to the breath whereon the victory lies;
Whether for valour or for statesmanship,
Or for the death whereto the vanquished falls,
Genius owes naught to chance or victory.
Victoria the Good had genius, well
To rule, as had the great Peace-maker King,
And, born of such illustrious ancestry,
And bred in such a school of statesmanship,
King George shall lead the Kingdom broadly out
"From precedent to wider precedent."

XII.

The Golden Age, wherefore the Golden Age?
'Tis nigh a score of centuries since when,
To such an Age, a Monarch's name was joined—
The Augustan Age, in literature and art.
Since then Queen "Bess" gave to the World her name,
And thus we have the Elizabethan Age;
Then came the reign of Queen Victoria—
A reign full fraught with glorious deeds of arms—
A brilliant reign of valorous command—
A reign of broad Victorian precedents,
The World's Imperial Victorian Age.
Then came the World's great Liberator King,
The idol of Britannia; beloved
By all the world was he: the King that ran
But half his rightful course, yet ran so well
That his good reign gave us the Age of Peace;
Such was King Edward, most beloved of Kings.
And so King George takes up his father's task,
And, standing on Britannia's Table-land
Of Light, gives pledge of peace, in world-wide bonds —
Bonds that shall bind the Powers that rule the World.
Unto the coming of the Prince of Peace,
For whom King George shall mark the Golden Age.
"Keen be thy sword," O King, for peace or war,
That readier be thy sword, on war's alarm.

NAVE, WESTMINSTER ABBEY